

HUMAN EVENTS

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How The *Post* Honors Free Speech

Ben Bradlee, the executive editor of the Washington *Post*, spoke at the Dirks Newspaper Forum earlier this year about the importance of freedom of the press. But the *Post* itself, it seems, is not such a great upholder of press freedom when former employees might talk about the company.

James McConnell Truitt, for instance, a former assistant to Washington *Post* publisher Philip Graham until he died, was let go from the *Post* in 1970. Truitt had been a power at the *Post* and knew a lot about its dirty linen, so the management tried to make certain he wouldn't talk by agreeing to pay him money in exchange for his silence. Legal hush money?

At any rate, Frederick S. Beebe, then chairman of the board of the Washington *Post* Co., wrote Truitt a letter dated Dec. 23, 1970, which said he was "instructing Bob Thome to send you a check for \$35,000 as full payment in connection with the termination of your employment by the Washington Post Company...."

Truitt, however, then added an astonishing caveat. "As I am sure you understand from our recent discussions," he said, "this payment is premised upon the assurance you have given that *you will not in the future write anything for publication about your experiences as an employee at the Post that is in any*

way derogatory of the Company, Phil or the Graham family (emphasis added)."

The full letter from Beebe to Truitt is printed below:

Post

THE WASHINGTON POST COMPANY

FREDERICK S. BEEBE
Chairman of the Board
444 MADISON AVENUE
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10022

December 23, 1970

Dear Jim:

Pursuant to our telephone conversation, this is to advise that I am instructing Bob Thome to send you a check for \$35,000 as full payment in connection with the termination of your employment by The Washington Post Company. This will be mailed, "Airmail--Registered".

As I am sure you understand from our recent discussions, this payment is premised upon the assurance you have given that you will not in the future write anything for publication about your experiences as an employee at the Post that is in any way derogatory of the Company, Phil or the Graham family.

I renew my invitation for you to stop in and see Liane and me when you are next in New York. In the meantime, we both send our very best wishes of the season and our hopes that 1971 will be the beginning of a splendid new period in your life.

Sincerely yours,

Frederick S. Beebe

Mr. James McC. Truitt,
c/o Post Office,
West Falmouth, Massachusetts. 02574

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